

The Eastern Iowa DXer



The Official Newsletter of the
Eastern Iowa DX Association

An affiliated club of the American Radio Relay League



January 1999

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Club Officers

President
Vice President
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Dave Andersen, KØRX
Nelson Moyer, KUØA
Tom White, KØVZR
Al Groff, KØVM
Joe Finkstein, WØMJN
Jim Spencer, WØSR
Dale Repp, WØIZ

PacketCluster

147.51, 144.91, 223.40, CRNETROM

WB8ZRL

Repeater

144.59/145.19

WØNX/R

From the President

Dave Andersen, KØRX

Wow - its been quite a fall DXing season thus far. 10 meters has been open most days to all parts of the world, there have been plenty of DXpeditions to work, and the weather has stayed warm enough to finish up those last minute antenna projects we all save for winter. As I write this, however, the temperature outside has dropped to 0° F. I guess most good things have to come to an end, and the warm weather sure did. Hopefully thought, the propagation will keep improving as we move into the winter months.

Based on chatter I heard on the repeater, it sounds like most of you managed to work the BQ9P operation. That's good - my impression is that things are only going to heat up between China and Taiwan, and the Taiwanese military may be very reluctant to allow future operations from there. There were some happy people who received SV/A CW cards recently (myself among them)! In the CQWW, I managed to work an old friend from college. 3A/N9NC is an EE for a telecommunications company, and when he goes to Monaco on vacation, he'd rather work the CQWW than gamble. Imagine that. The FT5ZH crew has been very accessible. Hopefully you have all managed to fill in a few bands and modes on that one. Finally, the intrepid Ron Wright is traveling again. I saw a spot for ZK3RW on 10 meters yesterday.

Looking at the DXpedition calendar for 1999, there

are a couple of nice ones coming up. ZL9CI should start up about the time you get this newsletter. There are two different efforts planned from the Australian Indian Ocean territories, and some of our Finnish friends plan to be QRV from the Australs and Marquesas. Best of luck on these - see you in the piles!

Our upcoming meeting date has been changed to Friday, January 22. The usual time and place. I changed it to try to accommodate W9QA and AG9A so they could give us a program on their recent 6Y2A CQWW CW operation! (M/M - 17,999 qsos in 48 hrs!) Unfortunately, scheduling for them is still a problem. Getting from the Chicago area to Cedar Rapids by 7pm Friday just isn't possible. Take a look at your calendars for April. I'd like to have them over to a meeting, and it looks like Saturdays are the best bet. We'll talk more on the 22nd. For the program on the 22nd, I will give a presentation and demonstration on single-operator, two-radio contesting techniques. Using a PC and appropriate contest software, it is possible to use two radios very effectively in a single-operator effort. For example, when the high bands are dying out, but the low bands are not yet sufficiently populated to sustain a good run, you can call CQ JA on 20 meters while searching and pouncing Europeans on 40. By using these techniques it is possible to add from 10-20% to your score. The hardware required is reasonably straight-forward to put together, and I want to show you what I have done with my station. See you on January 22!

73 de Dave KØRX

Minutes of the 1998 EIDXA Fall Meeting

The Fall meeting of the EIDXA was held on the Kirkwood Campus. The meeting began with introductions. A moment of silence was observed for Frank Weigelt, NØDX, who became a silent key on October 1, 1998. This was followed by the approval of the minutes as published for the summer meeting. The treasurers report was given indicating that before the meeting the club had \$449.69 in the treasury. Joe, WØMJN, reported that to the best of his knowledge, the repeater was up and running. The DX cluster report stated that the cluster is expected to be very busy for the upcoming CQ DX WW SSB contest. Tom, WB8ZRL, asked that activity be limited during the contest. Glen, KØJGH, is still looking for QSL card orders. Jim, WØSR, gave a DXAC report. He said that the advisory committee is becoming concerned about environmental issues for DXpeditions. There has been no response on contries of limited activity. Three new countries have been approved. Jim also said that there is a new attitude on remote card checking but that electronic QSLs probably won't happen for a while. Terry, WØAWL, stated that he had round filed an application from someone who had not shown up for over a year. A collection of \$52 was taken up for the upcoming Campbell Island DXpedition. Nominations and elections were held for new officers. The new officers are:

Dave Anderson, KØRX	President
Nelson Moyer, KUØA	Vice President
Tom White, KØVZR	Secretary/Treasurer

It was voted to hold the next meeting on Jan. 15, 1999. It was discussed about distributing the EIDXA newsletter by Email to those who had the capability. The decision was made to distribute the next newsletter in hardcopy and let the new VP work on an Email solution after he gets settled into his office. It was pointed out that the EIDXA has a website. It is:

<http://soli.inav.net/~icarc/eiadxa.html>

So far it does not contain much of anything. The meeting was adjourned and a tape on the XRØY Easter Island DXpedition was shown.

Respectfully submitted,
Frank Apple, WØGWK
Secretary/Treasurer

DX Is! CW

Nelson Moyer, KUØA

The proposals and counterproposals have been flying between ARRL and FCC in recent months regarding restructuring amateur radio. Central to both restructuring proponents is the minimization of CW as a licensing requirement for all license classes. The most likely scenario would be 5 wpm for General/Advanced and 10 or 12 wpm for Extra class. Personally, I think anything less than 10 wpm for General/Advanced and 15 wpm for Extra class is an invitation to disaster! If I could have it my way, the Extra class code speed would remain at 20 wpm. To understand why any dumbing down of CW requirements will impact DX'ing, one only had to listen to the recent DX'peditions to Eritrea, Pratas, Myanmar, and Amsterdam. Let's look at the operating techniques on both sides of the pileups to see what we learn.

My first observation is that DX'peditioners nowadays seem to be ordinary hams who have time and money to go to rare and exotic entities, without giving much thought to operating skills required to be successful in the pileups once they get there. We just witnessed entire groups of "DX'peditioners" attempting to operate from some of the most needed entities on the DXCC list, without any serious contest or DX experience as a prerequisite. The result of their inexperience, ignorance or arrogance was pandemonium on the bands. They worked primarily SSB, using splits guaranteed to antagonize the casual ragchewers, and when the pileups got completely out of control, they called for 6s and 7s when there was no propagation to the West Coast, or simply gave up and went QRT. One of my pet peeves is the CW op from a rare location, generating a huge pileup, who listens up 1-2. My rig doesn't have cascaded filters, auto notch, etc. and the receiver is completely blocked by the pileup so I can't hear anything. Come on guys, we all don't have an FT1000MP like you do. Listen up at least 5 and give the equipment challenged among us a break. If you needed Eritrea on CW, you were thankful Jacky spent so much quality time there before the Space A group arrived. Otherwise, you

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Packet Cluster Report

Tom Vavra, WB8ZRL

Sometimes the easiest part about getting a new one is working it. Obtaining that QSL card is often the more difficult task. Tools to help getting the card have varied over the years. Remember when a set of Callbooks was less than \$20? You copied QSL routes off the air or waited until QST or CQ came and had the route printed in a DX column. Now there are many of websites that serve these purposes. While not as prominent as it was just a few years ago, packet is still a much used source for QSL routes and addresses.

The best known of these on PacketCluster is the GoList. It is a data base of QSL managers, and is accessed locally about 300 times each month. SH/QSL <dx-callsign> will often provide you with the manager, and sometimes even the entire address. SH/QSL is provided by KIXN and is supported by user subscriptions (\$10/yr). There was a period of time in the past year where access was open to everyone. That has now changed and only the subscribers can SH/QSL. John may someday again allow unlimited access, but every time he does, his subscriber base disappears. For information about becoming a subscriber, TYPE/FILE GOLIST. The GoList can be updated by any user. Type UPDATE/QSLNEW and follow the directions. Addresses may be found for many hams. W9JA (in Racine, WI) has the BuckMaster CD-ROM online and has made it accessible to us. Type SH/HAM <call> to access it. You will immediately be told whether the request has been sent to W9JA, or that W9JA is not connected. The reply will return within a minute unless the path is real busy or one of the links is poor. Paul usually has the most recent CD-ROM which is updated each April and October. I try to keep an up-to-date list of the countries available on the cluster. TYPE/FILE REQQTH to see this list. Many of the DX addresses are available, but the database is far from complete.

Locally BuckMaster can also be found on W0CXX BBS. Connect to CIDBBS and enter BUC <call> for access. You will get much more information from this lookup than you get from W9JA. NØRXD in Iowa City has the QRZ CD-ROM on his node. You

can connect to NØRXD-3 and use the QRZ command. If you usually connect to PacketCluster direct (on 144.91, 147.51 or 223.40) then you can get to these BBS nodes by connecting to WB8ZRL-2 (alias IAELY) and then connecting to CIDBBS or NØRXD-3. When these tools fail to give us the information we are seeking, then we have to resort to the old fashioned way. Bulletins are available in the BULLETIN area on the PacketCluster. SH/BUL to see which ones are there, and TYPE <bulletin-file> to read it. And it is real handy to know which local has the Flying Horse Callbook CD-ROM and will look up a call for you.

FT-1000MP Comments

Heinz Blankenhagen, NRØX

It took quite a while to get familiar with the many features. Still quite a few I haven't used but now have a number of things to comment on, both good and bad. Don't know if you are on the 1000MP reflector but you could sure get lots of info there. Compared to the ICOM-765 I find few advantages with the MP. I expected the DSP to be very beneficial but was disappointed. The noise reduction settings are not very effective. The auto-notch works well except that the offending signal attacks the AGC and de-senses the receiver. The MP computer control interface provided RS-232 directly out of the radio. No need for an external interface box. The radio works fine with DX-Base. Have not tried it with CT yet. The dial illumination is a little too dim for my likes but have gotten used to it. It's not nearly as bright as the ICOM. There is only one key input. This creates a problem if you want to use the computer to key the radio and also use the internal keyer. To do this it is necessary to switch off the keyer when using the computer and switch back on again to use the keyer. The internal keyer is nice but requires the FH-1 keypad to access the memories. I have noticed that the keyer adds unwanted dits occasionally in the IAMBIC-1 and IAMBIC-2 modes. The noise blanker on the MP is not as effective as the ICOM's.

73 de Heinz NRØX

BQ9P Recap

Tom Vavra, WB8ZRL

BQ9P went QRT at 0030Z on November 19. They had amassed 37,600+ QSOs with 600 RTTY, 17K CW and 20K SSB. Fair numbers for less than ideal conditions. Solar Flux was 147 when they came on the air about 05Z on the 12th. It fell each day until it was 115 when they closed down. During the first evening, a solar storm sent the K-index to minor and major storm levels (a K-index of 4-6). It stayed there for 42 hours, and QSOs were difficult.

EIDX members did reasonably well, with most of us working them on some new band or mode. WA3AFS, KU0A, K0JGH, W0EJ, K0RX, K0VSV, and W0SR all worked it for a new one. 20 and 15 were the workhorse bands as the table below shows. Only NR0X managed to work them on another band: Heinz proudly owns both a CW and an SSB QSO on 80 meters. W0IZ and NR0X were among the 600 RTTY QSOs. AK0M and W0CK had only limited time to try to work them and came away without a contact. K0IIR and K0VZR had their transceivers in the shop and were not even able to listen for them.

The following log data of 20/15 meter contacts is from the BQ9P web site (<http://www.qsl.net/bq9p>) and differs from the log data given to me by several members.

	20 M		15 M	
	CW	SSB	CW	SSB
K0DX	X			X
K0GT	X	X	X	X
K0JGH	X	X		
K0RX	X			
K0VSV	X			
KK0U	X			X
KU0A	X	X		X
KZ0C	X	X		
N0AV	X	X	X	X
NR0X	X	X	X	X
NY0V	X	X	X	X
W0AWL		X		X
W0EJ	X	X		X
W0IZ	X			
W0SR	X	X		
W0WP		X	X	X
WA3AFS		X		
WB8ZRL	X	X		

The path to Pratas was traditional for that part of the world. Most of the time it was true short path. And they were heard true long path. But they were often spotted as long path, while it was really the morning crooked path to the Southwest. Heinz reports that both his 80M contacts were to the Southwest at exactly sunrise. 40 meters was a big disappointment. PacketCluster spots twice had them on 40 well after sunrise and heard only by the West coast. The one time there were heard here was an hour after sunrise and then they worked only W6 and W7 plus a few JAs. The only W0 I know that worked them on 40 was in Des Moines, and he worked them the first evening long path. They never showed up there again.

Pratas was number three on the need list. They should be well below that now. It was a reasonably successful DX-pedition, but we will all be in there the next time someone puts it on the air.

QSL'ing with DX Stamps

Nelson Moyer, KUØA

The breakup of the former Soviet Union and the subsequent deterioration of society resulted in unprecedented mail theft. If you need QSLs from Russians, you are in for long waits and frustration, unless you were fortunate to work one with a manager. There is a bit of good news for those of you who have to send your QSL direct; it's the DX stamp service run by William Plum. I have used this service off and on for over 10 years, and I'm happy to report that the success rate on SASEs using DX stamps beats green stamps, and IRC's. I'm batting 1.000 on cards sent to Russia with Russian stamps on the SASE. Give it a try for those difficult QSLs. Bill's address is:

William J. Plum
12 Glenn Road
Flemington, NJ 08822

Bill's phone number is 908-788-1020. He'll send you a packet of information on DX'ing supplies. I've found that his European air mail envelopes are very nice. They are opaque, and come in two sized, one for the return and one for the outgoing request. You don't have to fold the return envelopes, and they accommodate the oversize QSL cards used by some DX'ers. If you type the addresses on the envelope, lending it a more formal appearance than hand lettering, you'll get great returns, even from countries with notorious postal theft rates.

I have a few sets of stamps from several countries which I no longer need. If you'd like to try out QSL'ing with DX stamps, and need any of the ones I have, drop me a message on the cluster or send your request to me at ku0a@blue.weeg.uiowa.edu. Here is the list of stamps I no longer need:

3W, 5T, ER (2), HB (2), JT,YS, and YV

Prices run between \$1.10 and \$1.80 per set. I'll bring them to the January meeting.

QSL'ing with DX stamps is usually slightly more expensive than using IRCs, but when the country you need doesn't have a bureau, take IRCs, or has a high

rate of postal theft, it's cheaper in the long run to use stamps.

One other trick I've used successfully, is to write "nothing of value" in Russian on the back of the envelope for all mail going in that direction. That looks like this:

Ничего стоящего

With that little notice and nothing in your security envelope but your QSL card, and an unfolded SASE with Russian stamps, your mail will get through and you will receive that coveted confirmation.

DX'ing Aides

Do you ever wonder what zone that UAØ is in, and whether or not you need it? Well now your questions are answered. Here is a quick reference for those of us who don't have a software solution. de KUØA

Asiatic Russian Zones

Zone 18	Zone 19	Zone 23
ØA	ØC	ØY
ØB	ØD	
ØH	ØF	
ØO	ØI	
ØS	ØJ	
ØU	ØK	
ØW	ØL	
	ØQ	
	ØV	
	ØX	
	ØZ	

Favorite DX Web Site?

Do you have a favorite DX web site? Most of us are using the web as a primary source of DX'ing information. Whether it's a QSL route or the latest information on an upcoming DX'pedition, the web is a vital source of timely and accurate (?) data. Send me your favorite sites, and I'll publish them in the next EIDX newsletter. de KUØA

FT-920 User Comments

Terry Cellman, W0AWL

I was first licensed in 1977, and my first rig was a Kenwood TS-520s. My brother in law (KØTNJ) suggested it might be a good first rig. The second radio was also a Kenwood, a TS-830. This proved to be a real nice transceiver. I fought the urge to upgrade many times. I kept telling myself, real radios glow in the dark. Well, one day, the real radio stopped glowing and needed to be replaced. The Kenwood TS-850s seemed to be a logical choice. Well, its 1998 and 21 years later and I became intrigued with the Yaesu FT-920. The rest, as they say, is history. Nelson asked me to do a product review of the FT-920 for the newsletter. For the technical review of this radio, I prefer to have you read the product review in the October 1997 QST. This is only going to be my impressions of this rig after 2 months of operation. As you read this, remember that my past experience with other rigs is limited to only Kenwoods, and I don't think my review of the CW features on this rig will impress anyone! The Radio is nice sized, but then when you have 79 knobs or push controls, you need a radio that has a large enough control panel to accommodate them. I did find that it is possible to fat finger an unwanted button by mistake. I accidentally hit the SSB button and called several times on USB when I needed to be on LSB. The twin VFO knobs, and dual frequency displays with RX and TX lighted on and off buttons make it very difficult to be on the wrong VFO. Both VFOs can be selectively tuned either fast slow or normal speed. One tuning feature of the radio that I really like is the shuttle jog tuning control. You simply twist the ring on the main VFO to one side or another and the frequency changes very rapidly. The farther it is turned, the faster the frequency changes. This was faster than using direct frequency entry when you were only going from one part of the band to another. The radio is also capable of direct entry frequency band changes, and there is a one button band changes that take you back to the last frequency operated on that band. By using my Heil boom microphone, with the DX Dream cartridge, my audio sounded crisper and easier to understand than when the processor is turned on. The FT-920 drives my Kenwood TL-922A with two 3-500 tubes a little stronger than the TS-850 did, and it was extremely easy to interconnect the FT-920 with the TL-

922A. The only cables needed were two cables with RCA jacks at all four ends. On receive, the radio does well. Is it better on receive than the TS-850? I think so. The Kenwood had a SSB filter and the Yaesu uses an DSP at audio frequencies to cut through the QRM. You have high-low cut controls that allow you to set your passband cut off frequencies. This is very simple to use. Plus you have a visual display on the control panel that shows how much of the passband you have cut off. After you have your passband set, you can use the NR (noise reduction control) to adjust the level of the DSP based noise reduction. This really works well at reducing background noise. The notch filter on the FT-920 is effective at reducing carriers that are inside your band pass. It does the job as well as the JPS NIR 10 outboard DSP filter that I was using. Some of the other goodies found are 99 memories, digital voice recorder for both transmit and receive, and an extensive menu system which allows you to change 73 operating perimeters. The voice recorder sounded very normal and it is easy to use. As for the operation perimeters, I have only changed 4 of these. Many of them deal with contest numbering, CW usage, scan speed, memory functions, linear tuning pulses. The FT-920 only has one receiver. Don't let its dual watch system fool you into thinking it can act as a 2nd receiver. This system can be programmed to switch from VFO A to VFO B at a prescribed interval. It reminds me of the channel watch feature found on many 2 meter rigs. My over all impression is favorable. I got a lot of radio for under \$1500.00. I think it is probably a better radio than the Kenwood TS-570G, and to spend another \$900.00 for the TS-870S was not an option.



DX Is!—CW (continued from page 2)

would have been out of luck. And then there was the group that listened above 14.250 MHz, the group that announced a 30 KHz split and operated simplex on 14.205 while taking the loudest stations after listening to the roar for 2-3 minutes between QSO's, the group that announced they were listening up and started up 5 and just kept moving up until they were up 60 KHz with stations calling over the entire split, and so on, and so on. No wonder Martti made disparaging remarks about the new crop of DX'ers. It ain't like it used to be. Seems like skill has been replaced by affluence and ego. It's common knowledge that the good DX operators are easy to work. For the most part, none of the operations listed above were easy to work. However, even when the operators at the other end are not the best, the seasoned DX'ers get through with relative ease, leaving the hoards to slug it out in mutual ignorance. The few good CW ops on lately have managed to run normal splits, maintain good rates, and work a lot of happy people.

The next observation is the deterioration of discipline on this end of the pileup. I don't know exactly why, perhaps it's that many neophytes are starting to chase DX before learning anything about the art of DX'ing, maybe it's due to the general deterioration of manners and ethical behavior in the world, or maybe it's just feeding frenzy. Whatever it is, I can see absolutely no logic to the following practices:

- Policing the frequency—it just contributes to the QRM.
- Intentional jamming—get a life!
- Tuning on the DX transmit frequency—you're going to transmit up, so why do you think you should tune up where you will be listening, instead of where you will be transmitting? I heard one idiot tune up on 14.195 when the DX was listening above 14.270! Does that make any sense to you?
- Incessant calling—you can't hear the DX coming back to you if you're transmitting (duh).
- Coming back to the DX when he clearly gives a report to a call with none of the numbers or letters in yours—he knows the alphabet, why don't you? By calling over everyone's QSO, you are simply slowing the rate and

making it harder for others to spot the DX. You're also inviting them to call over your QSO if you're ever lucky enough to get one.

- Calling a 30 wpm CW op at 10 wpm with a bug and a lousy fist—if you can't match his speed, you shouldn't be calling—put in some practice with the keyer before you QRM the pileup.
- Giving your name, location and the weather report, along with your signal report—get real, the only thing the DX logs is your call, so you're just holding up the pileup.
- Asking "Who's the DX?", "Where's he listening?", "What's his QSL information?", "What country is he in?", or some other asinine question on the DX's transmit frequency—why not just LISTEN for a few minutes to give yourself a chance to think before you open your mouth and insert your foot.
- Calling the DX when they're -20 dB down in the mud and you couldn't hear your call if they sent it—who are you trying to fool? Don't you know what an alligator is (all mouth and no ears)?
- Overdriving so your signal will be 10 KHz wide with key clicks—obviously you have no pride and little skill, or you wouldn't have to stoop so low to attract attention.
- Calling the DX simplex when he clearly says up 5—you're just QRMing the pileup to no avail. A few seconds of thoughtful listening will usually reveal to you that the DX is operating split.

I'm sure I have forgotten some pretty dumb things I've heard in the past few months, so this isn't intended to be a complete list. All you have to do is tune the bands and you'll hear all this and more. It seems like the only refuge for the sane is the bottom 10 KHz of the HF bands. That's where the good CW ops hang out. What's going to happen to that refuge when the 10 wpm Extras (formerly Generals) arrive? Is that going to facilitate communication with rare and exotic locations? Probably not! And where is the next generation of CW DX operators coming from? We're

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DX Is!—CW (continued from page 7)

already in trouble. Can you imagine the excruciating pain of trying to work an op in P5 who sends at 5 wpm? The difficulty of working the frustrating F's is a clear warning to DX'ers of what will happen if the ARRL/FCC proposals are passed into law. Four of the 27 CW entities I still need are FH, FR/G, FR/J, FR/T, and it wasn't easy working FT5ZH on CW. During a recent SSB QSO with a prominent FH op, I ask for a quick CW contact. The response was, no CW. The op on Rotuma last spring didn't work CW. The op on Kermadec didn't work CW. The op on Palmyra didn't work CW. The op on Macquarie didn't work CW (but at least he tried). This experience foreshadows the death of CW as a DX'ing mode. By reducing code speeds or eliminating CW entirely, we loose the most efficient and useful means of emergency communication in amateur radio. We also loose the pride of accomplishment and the fraternal bond among us which embodies the spirit of amateur radio. And as land and equipment challenged DX'ers, we loose the mode which enables us little pistols to compete with the big guns for DXCC Honor Roll and 5BWAZ. If you love DX, save CW.

MEETING NOTICE

The next meeting of the Eastern Iowa DX Association will be Friday, January 22, 1999 at 7:30 p.m. in room 219C Linn Hall on the Kirkwood Community College campus. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. for eyeball QSOs. Monitor 145.19 for directions if needed. See you there.

1999 Dues are due!



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